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Robert N. Essick, *The Works of William Blake in the Huntington Collections: A Complete Catalogue*

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discuss such obvious documents of Blake's philosophy of mind as *The Book of Urizen* and "The Mental Traveller."

Thus while Hoagwood's reliance on two traditions does offer valuable insights, his historical contextualist perspective and the understanding derived from it need to be seen in the context of other contexts—including not only other historical contexts but the rest of the poet's *oeuvre* and anachronistic contexts as well. Had Hoagwood taken more notice of this larger context of his historical contextualism, his study could have gained considerable explanatory power without sacrificing any of its present virtues. Such an awareness of larger horizons might also have reduced some of the other apparent problems inherent in Hoagwood's book, which, some Blakeists might observe, is a rather priestly study of prophecy: a codifying, historicist study of a poet who scorned such devotion to generalization and memory and apotheosized their contraries, the particular and the imagination. Despite its shortcomings, however, *Prophecy and the Philosophy of Mind* makes a definite contribution to our understanding of Blake and Shelley, for in addition to numerous local insights, it gives us new understanding of the purposes of these two poets, and of the ways they attempted to realize these purposes.

Robert N. Essick. *The Works of William Blake in the Huntington Collections: A Complete Catalogue.* San Marino: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, Botanical Gardens, 1985. xviii + 256 pp. \$20.00.

Reviewed by G. E. Bentley, Jr.

The Huntington Library and Art Gallery has one of the great Blake collections in the world, including seventeen of his printed books (*All Religions Are One*, the "Exhibition of Paintings in Fresco," and *The French Revolution* in the only copies known),¹ seventeen of about ninety-six known letters, some of his greatest series of designs including those for *Comus* (8), *Paradise Lost* (12), "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (6), Visionary Heads (6), the Illuminated Genesis Manuscript (12), color-prints (3), and eighty-two works with his commercial engravings. Only five other collections have anything like such Blake riches—the British Library and Museum, the Library of Congress plus the National Gallery, Harvard, Yale, and Cambridge University—and probably none of these has been so extensively described and exhibited as that in the Huntington. There is of course a special need

THE WORKS OF WILLIAM BLAKE in the Huntington Collections

A Complete Catalogue by Robert N. Essick



for such exhibition and description of the Huntington collections, for they are not easily accessible to most Blake students, and they are never loaned to other institutions. To make up for this isolation, the Huntington is uniquely beautiful and wonderfully gracious and accommodating to students who do wend their way to the imaginary barony of San Marino in the avocado groves in the foothills of the mountains above Los Angeles.

The Huntington collection of Blakes has been repeatedly and extensively described, in the catalogue of drawings and paintings by C. H. Collins Baker (1938), revised and extended by R. R. Wark (1957, reprinted 1969), and in the handlist of the entire collection by R. N. Essick in *Blake* (1978). There have been Huntington exhibitions focusing on Blake in 1936 (*Paradise Lost* drawings), 1940 (*ibid.*), 1953, 1965-66 (William Blake and his Circle), 1972-73 (the followers of William Blake), 1974, 1978 (Prints by Blake), 1981-82 (prints by the Blake Followers), 1983, and 1984. The administra-

tion of the Huntington has been splendidly generous in making known its Blake riches.

One might well wonder what this new catalogue can offer which has not been available before, since the ground has been so frequently traversed. The answer is rather surprising. Most of the Huntington exhibitions and all the catalogues before Essick's were concerned almost exclusively with Blake's drawings and paintings. The scope of this work is, therefore, vastly greater than those of its predecessors. Further, even the graphic works are described in considerably greater detail than was heretofore available. The edition of Baker's catalogue revised by Wark (1957) consists of only fifty-five pages, whereas the corresponding sections of Essick's work comprehend drawings and paintings (pp. 1-140), separate prints (pp. 193-204), works of questionable attribution (pp. 233-38), and portraits of Blake (pp. 239-40), and to what Baker and Wark surveyed Essick has added extensive sections on Blake's writings (pp. 141-91) and his commercial book illustrations (pp. 204-31).

The first great virtue of this admirable catalogue, then, is its comprehensiveness.² For the first time we have an account of "all original Blake materials at the Huntington" (p. xi), not just the drawings and paintings.

The second great virtue of the new Huntington catalogue is its method: "[It] is based on a new examination of them [Blake's works] and all relevant documents I have been able to locate. My major goal has been to provide scholars and students with basic facts about the physical properties of the works recorded" (p. xi). With a first-class scholar such as Essick working with the primary materials of his field, the results are bound to be impressive.

With each drawing, he gives not only the physical details such as size and defects, but a meticulous and elaborate description, and usually a reproduction as well — there are fifty plates in all, including all those for *Comus*, *Paradise Lost*, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," and the Illuminated Genesis Manuscript.³ Further, there are careful comparisons with other versions of the same subjects, e.g., for the *Paradise Lost* designs. In future, critical accounts of these Huntington designs should begin with Essick's descriptions of them.

An incidental advantage of the 1985 catalogue is that it is more up-to-date than its predecessors. Essick reports that the Huntington copies of *Innocence* (I), *Songs* (N), and *Visions* (E) were disbound in 1983 and 1984 and that rare prints were acquired as late as August and December 1984 (pp. 146, 149, 163, 194, 203).

Most of the new profits from this catalogue are for literary scholars, for the Huntington copies of Blake's writings and of books with his commercial engravings have only been described in detail previously in comprehensive bibliographies such as Keynes' great *Bibliography of William Blake* (1921), the Keynes & Wolf *Census*

(1953), and *Blake Books* (1977). One might have expected, or indeed hoped, that his predecessors had exhausted what is to be found in the Huntington books, but this is not the case. Though Essick builds confidently on the work of his predecessors, he has a good deal that is new to offer, and every copy has been described with a fresh eye. For instance, he reports (as no one else has) that the edges of *All Religions Are One* (A), *No Natural Religion* pl. a2, *Song of Los* (E), and *The Ghost of Abel* (C) are deckled (pp. 143, 145, 165, 175), indicating that they were the original outside edges of the sheets from which they were cut, and he can even deduce from these facts that the *All Religions Are One* plates "are quarter pieces [cut] from a sheet approx. 75.6 x 54 cm." (p. 143). He points out numerous small variants which Blake created in coloring his works in illuminated printing and which have not been remarked before. In *Songs* pl. 13-14 ("The Little Boy Lost [and Found]" in *Innocence* [I] and *Songs* [E]) the boy has been given a hat (pp. 146, 157), in pl. 19 (the innocent "Holy Thursday" in *Songs* [E]) the man at bottom left has a book in his hands (p. 157), and in pl. 46 ("London" in *Songs* [N]) a serpent has been added in the bottom margin (p. 163). In *Song of Los* (E) pl. 8, the etched butterfly visible beside 11. 6-8 in other copies is not apparent (p. 166), and in *Milton* (B) pl. 4 there are "Eight stars drawn in [the] sky with pen and ink" (p. 169). All these variants should be recorded in the standards bibliographies of Blake. Essick has advanced our knowledge very considerably with his original observation and careful recording of these minute details.

Very occasionally the vagaries of institutional records or of proofreading have had small unfortunate consequences. Of the history of the Huntington's copy of Blake's great print of Chaucer's *Canterbury Pilgrims* he can say no more than that it "has been in the Library's collection for many years" (p. 202); in recording the variants in Blake's transcription of Genesis in his *Illuminated Genesis Manuscript* (pp. 112-114) he corrects and supplements his predecessors very usefully but omits Blake's alteration in Genesis 2.4 of "the day that" to "the day when," and he mistranscribes Blake's 3.16 "in sorrow shalt thou" as "in sorrow shalt though"; watermarks such as J WHATMAN are regularly recorded in large capitals rather than in large and small capitals, thus creating unnecessary variants. But these eccentricities are very few and trifling.

This is a scholarly work of considerable importance, constituting a real advance in knowledge, thorough, accurate, intelligent, and illuminating. The Huntington Library and Art Gallery and the community of Blake students are exceedingly fortunate that a scholar of Essick's eminence should have devoted himself to such an apparently thankless task and produced a work of such remarkable excellence. *Semper honos nomenque tuum laudesque manebunt* (Aeneid 1.607).

¹The most important works in illuminating printing not to be found there are the *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *Jerusalem*.

²No attempt is made to detail the Huntington's extensive holdings of reprints, criticism, and scholarship concerning Blake nor to describe the related materials such as the bill for Blake's funeral or drawings and manuscripts of contemporaries like Flaxman, Fuseli, Stothard, and Palmer.

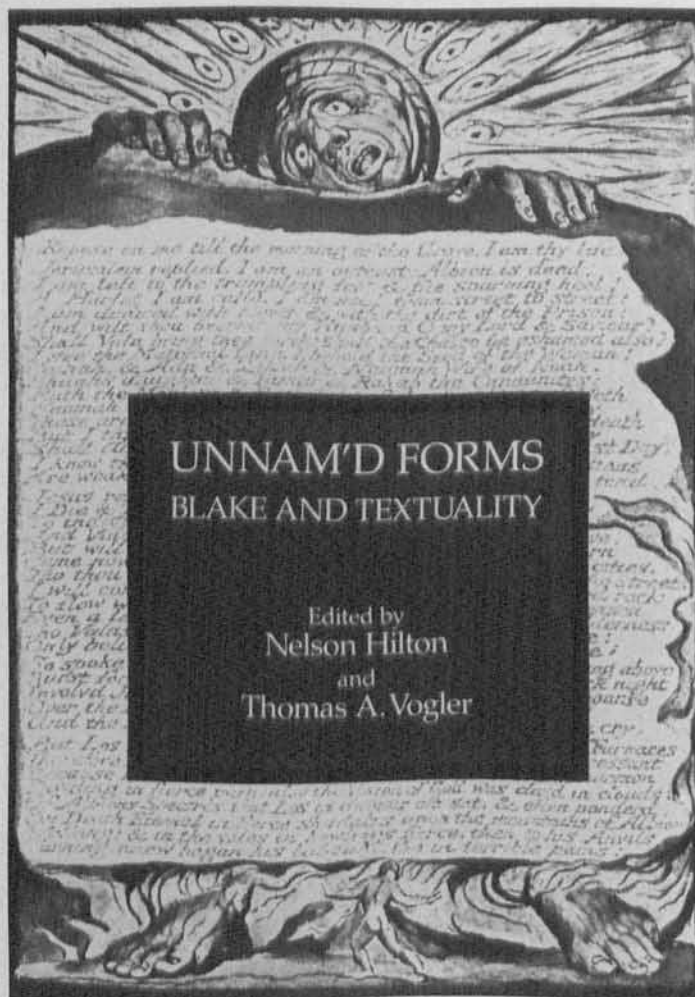
³These reproductions are serviceable, but they are only in black-and-white, and they are not so good as those in previous Huntington catalogues. A major catalogue deserves better plates than these. Doubtless the motive was to keep the price to the remarkably low level of \$20.

Nelson Hilton and Thomas A. Vogler, eds.
Unnam'd Forms: Blake and Textuality.
 Berkeley: University of California Press,
 1986. xiii+267 pp. 27 illus. \$34.00.

Reviewed by Dan Miller

That Blake criticism has entered a transitional phase is now beyond doubt. We are witnessing far-reaching, possibly radical changes in the methods, concerns and purposes of Blake study. The motives for change stem, in part, from a realization that the previous critical project, shaped largely by Northrop Frye, has attained its exegetical goals and thereby reached its limits. But even more powerfully, it is the body of linguistic and critical speculation which has come to be known as "literary theory" that has forced a reevaluation and a redefinition of Blake criticism. Auguries of innovation abound, and the rhetoric of passage—"major shift," "paradigm change," "new dispensation"—grows somewhat too familiar, even to the advocates of change. But neither hyperbolic diction nor the false starts and premature attempts that unavoidably plague any new critical enterprise should obscure the possibilities for substantial change. The transition is only barely underway, and since all transitions are periods of risk and uncertainty, the future of Blake studies is still very much up in the air. But we are clearly in transit, and the essays collected by Nelson Hilton and Thomas A. Vogler in *Unnam'd Forms* serve admirably to register the new movement and explore some of the terrain it opens.

According to its dust jacket, the book "initiates the encounter of Blake studies and contemporary literary-critical concepts of 'textuality,'" and a blurb from W. J. T. Mitchell asserts, "It will serve as the basic introduction to the application of advanced theory to Blake." These claims are accurate enough and well warranted by the essays within, but the undertaking of *Unnam'd Forms* is actually much more specific and consequential.



The subtitle "Blake and Textuality" might be translated "Blake and Derrida," for while Derrida is not the only contemporary theorist of language used to illuminate Blake (Lacan, Kristeva and Foucault also figure prominently), his is the name most insistently and forcefully invoked. Most of the essays work to bring Blake and Derrida into some sort of alignment, to discover some mode of rapprochement. Putting it perhaps too bluntly, we see here Blake, still the presiding prophet of Romanticism, and Derrida, now the tutelary genius of modern theory, put on the same stage and asked to define their common ground. Such a meeting was inevitable, however much it becomes here often a strange and, at times, strained encounter. But the venture itself is important. A coming-to-terms between Derrida and Blake seems natural—and urgent—in a way that a similar confrontation of Blake and, say, Heidegger or Nietzsche does not. If earlier critics felt compelled to connect Blake and Hegel or, more recently, Blake and Freud, the current agenda demands an encounter with Derrida. It would be easy to dismiss these arranged meetings as critical fad and fashion, and such dismissals are all too certain and predictable. But as the literary and philosophic landscape